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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SALAZAR of Colorado).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

May 21, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable JOHN T. SALAZAR to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD) for 5 minutes.

SAFE ACT RE-INTRODUCTION

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, to help address domestic violence in our country, I rise to announce the re-introduction of the Security and Financial Empowerment Act, or as it is better known, the SAFE Act. Domestic violence is a personal and social tragedy that negatively impacts all of our society.

On average, every day in our country, more than three women are murdered by their husband or boyfriend, and nearly one-third of American women

report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives.

The physical and psychological consequences of domestic violence are exacerbated by the less obvious economic consequences. For example, one of the key reasons survivors stay in or return to an abusive environment is because they are financially dependent upon their abuser to provide for them and their children. As a result of the abuse, employed women often lose their jobs due to frequent tardiness or absenteeism or because their abuser stalks and harasses them at work.

To help break this cycle of violence, I have introduced the SAFE Act with representative TED POE.

The SAFE Act would provide employed survivors of domestic violence with greater employment protections and increased economic stability.

Specifically, the SAFE Act would enable the survivors of domestic violence to pursue legal assistance, medical care and meet other immediate needs associated with violence in their lives without the fear of losing their job.

If survivors of abuse are fired or forced to leave their job as a result of the abuse, the SAFE Act makes them eligible for unemployment benefits. The SAFE Act also helps employers address the negative impact of domestic violence in the workplace.

While it is true that domestic violence is a personal tragedy, it is also true that it has costly negative consequences to employers who pay an estimated \$3-13 billion a year in sick leave, absenteeism and lost productivity.

The SAFE Act helps businesses save money by helping to reduce absenteeism and lost productivity and by enabling businesses to retain valuable and experienced employees, thereby avoiding the high cost associated with training new staff.

In summary, the SAFE Act empowers survivors of domestic violence. It

protects the bottom line of business, and it improves the quality of life of our American society.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the many advocacy groups for their support of the SAFE Act and for the work they do every day to end domestic and sexual violence in our country.

And I sincerely thank Representative POE for his cosponsorship, and I look forward to working with him and my colleagues in Congress to pass the SAFE Act and empower women against the violence in their life.

FOOD STAMP CHALLENGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) is recognized during morning-hour debate for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, today is my final day on the Food Stamp Challenge, an initiative where public officials eat for 1 week on a food stamp budget, \$21 for the week. That is \$3 a day, or \$1 per meal. This amount reflects the national average of the food stamp benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Food Stamp Challenge is to raise awareness of the crucial role the food stamp program serves in the lives of 26 million Americans each month, including over 450,000 in my State of Massachusetts.

Three of my esteemed colleagues, Representatives JO ANN EMERSON, JAN SCHAKOWSKY and TIM RYAN, joined me in taking the challenge over the past week. And although we may be less energetic and perhaps crankier than when we started the challenge nearly a week ago, each of us has learned a great deal.

Certainly my wife, Lisa, and I have gained valuable insights from our experience on a very tight budget. We have much more sympathy over how the lack of energy and the hard choices of

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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